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ABSTRACT

The main causes of social exclusion in Albania were studied along with ways in which vocational education and training could help combat it. The study identified target groups, analyzed existing policies and the role of education and training for target groups, and pilot tested projects to support the identified groups. The following policy changes were deemed necessary: (1) help the socially excluded gain social inclusion by improving their conditions; (2) use education and training to prevent social exclusion; (3) prepare social policies to protect people from and prevent social exclusion; (4) improve existing policies on social exclusion; and (5) plan concrete measures to combat social exclusion. A strategy consisting of analytical and operational components was recommended for achieving these policy changes. The analytical component called for creating social capital for a cohesive society, formulating a strategic route, and identifying the components of strategic action. The operational component demanded included the following items: (1) an action plan pinpointing aims based on differences and peculiarities of each of Albania's areas; (2) preparation and implementation of short-term projects for socially excluded groups; and (3) preparation and implementation of mid-term projects expanding previous projects to combat social exclusion. (A list of courses offered by VTC in Albania is appended. The bibliography lists 10 references.) (MN)

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COUNTRY REPORT

Vocational education and training against social exclusion

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Vocational education and training against social exclusion

Albania

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1. Introduction

The study of vocational education and training against social exclusion has five main aims:

- to explore the main causes of social exclusion in Albania;
- to identify the target groups;
- to analyse existing policies to help different target groups and suggest improvements;
- to analyse the role of education and training for these groups;
- and to conduct pilot projects to support these groups.

This study treats problems as issues in need of study and research. It gives a general picture of the situation in Albania including all the factors - social, economic and political - that affect the thousands of people isolated from the rest of the society. The report contains analyses of both the risk groups and the policy issues.

After several discussions among experts of different countries on social exclusion, the Albanian experts accepted the Latvian definition of social exclusion.

***Social exclusion** is a broad concept. As well as poverty, it encompasses the inability to participate effectively in economic, social, political and cultural life. It also covers alienation from mainstream society. The European Union links the causes of social exclusion to public policies and their weaknesses.*

Kutsar (1997) sees welfare deficits as a key cause of social exclusion.

Deficiencies that create deprivation:

- no regular work;
- no alternative sources of income;
- bad or very bad health conditions;
- little or no social protection;
- problems in paying for accommodation.

Deficiencies that lead to isolation:

- no connection with the labour market;
- living alone or as a single parent;
- fear of being in public places or even at home;
- not belonging to organisations;
- no interest in politics.

Character deficiencies that lead to anomie and disillusion:

- awareness of lack of perceived power and influence;
- feeling uninformed;

- poor grasp of politics;
- feeling that making future plans is futile;
- decline in self-esteem

These three types of deficiency sow the seeds for social exclusion (*adapted from Kutsar 1997*).

The second set of deficiencies is most applicable to Albania. In every country, people become socially excluded for reasons peculiar to that country. That said, in every country, education, training and retraining can play a key role in reducing social exclusion.

It follows that vocational education and training can help restore people to the labour market. It can improve and upgrade their work skills. It can help them to integrate with society and link up with other community resources. It can raise their self-esteem, teach them their rights and responsibilities, and altogether make them more self-sufficient.

Vocational education and training works in different ways with different groups. Vocational education and training relates to every level of training, retraining and education so that people can get work again and become members of society.

In every country, there are bound to be some people who find life difficult. Some cannot even cover their minimum needs. They are beyond social support, have nothing to offer the labour market and cannot get work. They do not go to school or train. As a result, they stay apart from society – and are known as socially excluded, disadvantaged or vulnerable. We rarely discuss why these people get left behind and left out and why governments neglect them. This happens even in the Western countries, but, during transitional periods in Eastern countries, it is particularly painful and dangerous.

This research aims to show why this happens; to identify excluded groups in Albania; and to find ways of alleviating the problem. We will also comment on past social policies and suggest ways to promote social inclusion at both state and local level.

The characteristics of socially excluded groups differ according to their environment. Socially excluded groups are numerous everywhere, in cities, towns and rural areas. They live on the coast and inland where unchecked migration is pulling apart the traditional family pattern. At the same time, there are no ways of laying sound foundations for robustly structured families. In these areas, men and women have little hope of finding work and instead turn to crime. As a result, old people and women suffer from neglect, children are abandoned and young people get involved with drugs and other illegal activities.

Transition also affects the Southern and South Eastern areas, sharply raising the number of people at risk of social exclusion. As emigration is seasonal, fewer young people resort to illegal activities and fewer women and girls, to prostitution. Nevertheless, these areas are more and more economically dependent on the production, sale and distribution of narcotics; and this, in turn, raises the incidence of young people trading in, and consuming, drugs. These difficulties largely stem from men leaving their families, thereby upping the divorce rate and undermining the structure of the family.

Recently , those in the rural areas of Northern and North Eastern Albania were once again threatened by a return to traditional rites and mores. As older people are insulated against the old ways, this mostly affects young girls. Sadly, they will be more influenced by negative features of the Kanun, the old law of Albania, and not by its straightforward, honest facets. And that, together with the high rate of emigration for men, will put them at risk of prostitution and trafficking.

When we implemented the report, we included contrasting perspectives and approaches to its different points of view. The research required a) amassing data; b) analysis of, and comparison between, information from different sources; c) interviewing representatives from different target groups; d) interviewing people who work with groups at risk; e) policy makers; f) people from public administration. We also analysed existing policies and suggested ways of making them more effective.

To build up a vivid picture of the situation in Albania, we used various sources of information sources such as:

1. Albanian Human Development Report (United Nations Development Programme, 1998)
2. World Bank Research on Policy Issues for Groups in Risk (January 1999)
3. Situation Analyses 1998 (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
4. The Victims of Truancy - publication of research on the issue (1998)
5. Information published by the Soros Foundation on different projects implemented in Albania
6. Child Abuse Phenomenon in the Albanian Society (1997)
7. Violence against women and the psycho-social taboo that encourages it (1995)
8. Press articles
9. Annual report of Albanian National Observatory, 1999

We would like to stress that we worked from limited data. It was either out of date, unreliable or incomplete. In most cases, we could not compare data from different sources or assess the extent of the issue from one period to another.

Although we consider data from many different sources, we do not claim this is a quantitative report of the situation in Albania for two reasons.

The officials tried to hide, play down, or ignore the risks facing the population, in an attempt to protect themselves. They did not realise that, by ignoring or avoiding the problem, they were failing to solve it.

We lack data on population registration (census), and especially on people at risk. However, even if we had it, it would be useless because records cannot keep pace with the rapid demographic changes in Albania caused by migration within and beyond the country. Hence, this is a mostly qualitative report.

To offset this, we relied more on information collected by interviewing a variety of people in this field about their experience of working with different groups, or their feëlings about the issue.

2. Context

Founded in the 12th century, Albania is one the oldest countries in the region. After its occupation by the Ottoman Empire, Albania re-emerged as a state in 1912. It became a communist state in 1941, only throwing off Hoxha's yoke and embracing political pluralism in 1991, slightly later than other eastern and central European countries.

2.1 *The impact of transition on Albanian society*

The transition affected Albanian society in many ways. To illustrate the changes between 1991 and 1999, here are some key facts.

Demographic changes

Widespread migration and the redistribution of the population altered the structure of the employable population. This, in turn, upset the labour market and led to increasing unemployment. At the same time, internal migration repopulated urban areas and caused overpopulation – together with great social and economic change – in some regions. As a result, many people found it hard to integrate into life in new surroundings. They also had problems with ethics, values, education, practical skills, communication and competition in the labour market. They all aspired to a standard equivalent to the rest of the population, and this created a competitive – and, sometimes, combative – mood. Sometimes, these people saw themselves as different from others and incapable of competing with them, as ignored and lacking respect. Then, given the everyday struggle to survive, they are at risk of embracing crime as a way of showing others that they can do something, even if that something is negative rather than positive.

In 1991, Albania had a population of 3,286 million, growing since 1980 at an annual rate of 2.01 %. The high growth rate was due to a high birth rate - the highest in Europe with 3.02 children per woman - and a low mortality rate. After 1990, the political, social, and economic transition brought about great changes in Albanian demography. Approximately 15% of the population emigrated over the ensuing ten years. And, in the wake of continuing socio-economic change, the growth rate is expected to decline in the coming years. Furthermore, most Albanian emigrants are at child-producing age, between 19 and 40. This factor will clearly influence the birth rate in future. The death rate in Albania continues to be low.

Table 1: Annual average population (in thousands)

Years	Total population	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Density
1990	3,286	1,686	1,600	1,176	2,080	114
1992	3,190	1,589	1,601	1,165	2,024	111
1993	3,167	1,566	1,601	1,314	1,852	110
1994	3,202	1,586	1,616	1,345	1,857	111
1995	3,249	1,608	1,641	1,381	1,868	113
1996	3,283	1,624	1,659	1,445	1,838	114
1997	3,324	1,629	1,695	1,526	1,798	115

Source: Albanian Human Development Report 1998.

Table 2: Life expectancy at birth (in years)

Years	Total	Male	Female
1950-51	53.5	52.6	54.4
1960-61	64.9	63.7	66.0
1980-81	69.5	67.7	72.2
1989-90	72.2	69.3	75.4
1990-95	71.4	68.5	74.3

Source: Albanian Human Development Report 1998.

Urbanisation and overpopulation

After 1990, changes in the population structure caused two kinds of internal migration: migration from villages into cities and from small towns to larger cities, especially Tirana. Given a society that was mainly rural (64%) up to 1990, you would expect population growth in the main industrial areas. However, the sudden urbanisation of the last nine years has generated serious social problems. For example, while its infrastructure has remained the same, the city of Tirana has grown by 30 % since 1990.

However obvious it may appear, this development poses a serious challenge for Albania. In a democratic society, people have the right to live where they choose, but complications invariably follow if the state is incapable of supporting their movements either economically or socially. The people who move into towns and cities need training and re-education to survive in their new environment. At the same time, they must also come to terms with new values.

Massive emigration

Up until 1990, no one could emigrate from Albania. Since 1990, it has taken place on a massive scale, and has become the key factor driving demographic change. Italy and Greece are the top destinations for Albanian emigrants. Italy now has 100,00 to 150,000; and Greece has 350,000 to 400,000. Data show that other countries harbour emigrants on a smaller scale: the United States (10,000), Germany (12,000), Belgium (2,500), France (2,000), Turkey (2,000), Canada and Switzerland

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(no statistics for the two latter countries). This phenomenon has a disproportionate number of illegal emigrants and a higher incidence of men than women.

Albanian emigration also features a high proportion of both families and young people. Emigration stems not only from a need for economic development, but also to escape the political and social tensions in the country. However, those who decide to leave the country are not prepared for the labour market requirements that obtain at their destinations. Sometimes, they simply do not have the education, training and spirit to face the challenges of the western world.

Social relations

The revival of the old Albanian tradition of blood feud confronts post-communist society with another challenge. Considered extinct under communism, this tradition is linked to historical, as well as political, economic, and social factors. The main reasons for its return derive from the overthrow of values that followed the fall of communism. This particularly applies to communities in the far north beyond state authority. To compensate for this, these old self-regulating systems resurfaced, especially in the Kanun region which was developed during the Ottoman occupation.

We believe those involved in these rituals need messages of peace and humanity. They must appreciate that in a democratic society the individual is represented by the state, and the state is responsible for protecting its citizens. In fact, we must teach them how to live in a democratic society.

Crime

Economic and political deterioration at the beginning of 1997 caused a sharp rise in crime and overall aggression. The main reasons for this were arming civilians and the anarchic conditions that resulted from the destruction of the state.

As in other countries undergoing transition, the sudden return of individual freedoms favoured an equally sudden upsurge of crime in Albania. This upsurge was encouraged by a dysfunctional state almost incapable of maintaining social order; a state incapable of intervention when rival gangs attacked each other. As a result, organised crime spread throughout the country and the crime rate rocketed.

During 1997, the most common crime was murder; it accounted for 51% of all crimes committed, while attempted murders accounted for 33%. Minors and young people under 26 committed approximately 53% of all crimes. Poorly- educated, armed teenage gangs of lower-class origins emerged as the perpetrators. This situation highlighted the weakened state of legal institutions, which in turn contributes to the ever-rising crime rate.

Crises of 1997

Unlike other ex- communist countries, Albania faced several obstacles on its way to becoming a democratic society. In particular, 1997 was a year of deep political and economic crises.

The causes of the crisis included: unresolved problems in privatisation, incomplete financial reforms, corruption in public administration and an under- developed banking system. There was also rapid but ill-advised public investment in dubious pyramid schemes; the government failed to react to this catastrophe and, according to World Bank estimates, Albanians lost US$1.2 billion. Further causes were: tax evasion, various institutional difficulties and a general lack of financial sophistication coupled with a get-rich-quick mentality. Experts are still trying to analyse all the causes and draw conclusions from them.

War in Kosovo, Spring 1999

The development of Albanian society reflects developments and instability in the Balkans. Furthermore, as if the Albanians had not enough difficulties already, the Serbs attacked the Albanians in Kosovo in spring 1999. Serbian and other para-military forces humiliated, raped, tortured and killed Kosovan Albanians and forced the survivors out of Kosovo. This put the Albanians on their mettle, faced as they were with the challenge of having to accommodate over half a million refugees inside a month at a time when there were not enough resources to go round anyway. In the event, the Albanians survived due to the understanding, support and assistance they received from the United States and other countries including many in Europe.

Family

Today's Albanian family has been affected by changes on many levels. The most obvious is the reduction in family members due to separation. Household with more than two generations living under the same roof declined from 24% to 16 % between 1979 and 1989. However, in rural areas the 24% rate still applied in 1989. Also the number of families composed of two generations has declined from 29% to 19% between 1979 and 1989. Nowadays, young couples prefer to live alone, although the housing shortage restricts this ambition.

In 1990, according to INSTAT, the national average household size was 4.7, 3.9 in urban areas and 5.3 in the countryside.

In small Albanian families, wives tend to be more independent of their husbands while children and other family members are relatively separate from each other. This independence derives from changes in Albanian mentality. Another important element in Albanian society is the presence of family planning methods, despite the difficulties caused by social, economic and geographical factors. The communist system fomented high population growth and large families. Abortion was illegal and punishable, and performed only in cases of extreme health risk. Family planning services were confined to the health education of mothers. Birth rates were higher than in other European countries and differed between rural and urban areas. Marriage is common in Albania. Evident changes in new marriages and families result from changes in mindsets, and in social and economic realities during the transition period. That said, the marriage rate has not changed recently.

Alongside traditional marriage, an alternative way of life has emerged: cohabitation outside marriage. This lifestyle is not supported by Albanian family legislation. The single-parent family is also emerging as a rise in extra-marital births has increased the number of single mothers who raise their children alone. Given today's social and economic conditions, together with social intolerance and the state's inability to provide social support, such families find life very hard. In many cases, mothers and children are separated, and the children sent to institutions.

Divorce

Recent democratic developments have changed the economic, political, social and cultural status of married people. These changes often caused conflict that lead to divorce. Divorce rates rose until 1990 and then went down. In 1960, the divorce rate per thousand was 0.5 or three divorces for every 1,000 families. By 1990, divorce rate had risen to 0.8 per thousand, 1.6 per thousand in urban areas and 0.4 per thousand in rural areas. This meant a national average of 3.8 divorces per 1,000 families, 6.2 in cities and 2.1 in the countryside. In 1996, the number of divorces went down to 0.6 or 2.4 divorces for every 1,000 families. In 1997, reports claim that the number of divorces has further declined.

The number of divorces has declined for several reasons. One is unemployment, which makes women more dependent on their husbands. This means that many women continue to live with

their husbands, even when they are on such bad terms that married life has become pointless. Divorce records reveal that the majority of divorce actions are filed by women.

Labour market and unemployment

By the end of 1990, Albania's economy was entirely centralised. It comprised two primary sectors: the state, concentrated mainly in cities, and agricultural co-operatives, concentrated in rural areas.

In 1991, the nature of employment became more complex as a result of the newly implemented Law on Land and Privatisation. Employment consisted of:

- the state sector - state enterprises, joint ventures, and budgetary institutions (central and local);
- the non-agricultural private sector - the self employed and their subordinates;
- the agricultural private sector - farmers.

Referring to employment data from 1990 and later, the number of employed Albanians has steadily declined. At the end of 1990, some 1.4 million people had jobs (75 %), but, by the end of 1997, only 1.1 million (60 %) were employed. This decline was caused by privatisation in various industrial branches, trade, public services, construction and food industry, by the closure of non- profitable enterprises and by reforms in public administration.

Unemployment in Albania is a very serious social problem. The transition period from 1992 to 1994 saw high unemployment levels based on 400,000 registered unemployed. In 1995 and 1996, this figure dropped to 158,000. The decline came about because of new jobs. That said, many people were disappointed when employed agencies discouraged them from re-registering after their unemployment benefits ran out. By December 1997, the number of the registered unemployed increased to 194,000. And, during 1998, unemployment increased by 4,000 to 5,000 per month, with the increase becoming more obvious after the first half of the year. According to data for registered unemployed, most of them are aged 21 to 34. By the end of 1994, this group accounted for 50% of the registered unemployed; by the end of 1997, it was still high at 45%.

The nature of unemployment in Albania is little different for men and women. The percentage of unemployed women and men from 1993 to 1997 varied between 45 to 50%.

According to data on the work force and the latest census, the economically active account for some 83% of the population capable of working. In 1997, this figure was 70%. In 1989, the unemployment rate was 7.3%; by the end of 1997, it was 14.9%.

Most of the registered unemployed live in urban areas. By the end of 1994, urban unemployment accounted for 80% of all unemployed. By the close of 1997, this figure had risen significantly to 94%.

Note that farmers, who own a plot of land, do not qualify for unemployment status. This is one reason why the percentage of rural unemployment is lower than that in urban areas. Furthermore, there are no labour offices in rural areas so there is no way of gauging the extent of unemployment among rural people. However, as many of them are moving to more populated centres, they are clearly increasingly disinclined, even if they own a plot of land, to rely on it for a living. Note, too, that the highest percentage of Albanian emigrants consists of rural people - another factor that keeps rural unemployment down. We now need a nationwide survey of this issue, so that we could carefully analyse the data collected.

The number of heads of families heads registered with employment agencies, has risen from 33% of all those unemployed in 1994 to 44% in 1997. Unemployment data about levels of education indicates that between 1993 and 1997 some 50% of those unemployed had high school and university diplomas.

A defining feature of the Albanian labour market is the long-term unemployment that emerged at the end of 1992. The economic collapse and lack of investments made it very hard for people to find new jobs during this time. By the end of 1993, the long-term unemployed accounted for 65% of all those registered; in 1997, this figure rocketed to 84%. Almost half of these had high school diplomas or university degrees, and 60% were under 35.

Another feature is the striking difference in unemployment rates across various regions. For example, in regions like Kurbin, Kucova, Kukes and Shkodra the unemployment rate at the end of 1997 was twice the national average. From 1993 to 1997, the North Eastern part of the country registered the highest unemployment rate. By the end of 1993, this region's unemployment rate was 25% and, by the end of 1997, it was 16%. There are also conspicuous differences in unemployment even within regions. For example, the unemployment rate for Devoll, a Southern Albanian city, has been a mere 3% while unemployment in the southern city of Vlora has reached 22%.

Table 3: Population and labour force (in thousands)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Population	3,167	3,202	3,249	3,283	3,324
Population eligible to work	1,763	1,786	1,820	1,850	1,861
Labour force	1,364	1,423	1,309	1,274	1,301
Participation rate (%)	*77*	*81*	*73*	*69*	*70*
Employed	1,063	1,161	1,138	1,116	1,107
Unemployed registered	301	262	171	158	194
Unemployment rate (%)	*22*	*18*	*13*	*12*	*14.9*

Source: Albanian Human Development Report 1998

Table 4: Benefits, wages and pensions (in thousands)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Unemployment benefit	1,237	1,920	2,150	2,150	2,150
Official minimum wage	1,200	2,400	3,300	4,400	4,400
Average monthly wage	3,084	4,778	6,406	8,638	9,558
Maximum pension					
Urban	1,710	3,840	4,400	5,920	6,500
Rural	750	750	750	1,138	1,248

Source. Albanian Human Development Report 1998

Macro economic developments

Until 1996, Albania's gross domestic product grew, inflation declined and control of the budget deficit tightened to such an extent that experts in international financial institutions considered the transition a success. A comprehensive, well-orchestrated economic programme with defined policies began in the second half of 1992. Until mid-1993, attempts were made to stabilise the urgent

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macroeconomic crisis inherited from the previous political system and the medium term economic programme from 1993 to 1996 had the desired stabilising effect.

The first effects of this programme emerged in improved macroeconomic indicators. Gross domestic product grew significantly with an annual increase from minus 28% in 1991 to plus 13.3% in 1995. And inflation plummeted from 22.6% in 1992 to 7.8% in 1995.

Stabilisation characterised 1992 and it went on until 1995. Figures show this was achieved by applying tight monetary, fiscal and credit measures to control prices. Stabilisation owed even more to reduced budgetary outlay and the Bank of Albania asserting direct, continuous credit control. An ambitious economic restructuring programme was finished in under five years.

The ratios among elements of the gross domestic product were reversed: industry's contribution to it dropped from 37.2% in 1990 to 12.5% in 1996, while agriculture's share grew from 40.2 % in 1990 to 52.85 in 1996.

This decreasing stress on industry accompanied other major changes in the structure of the Albanian work force and in the nature of employment itself. Industrial employment fell dramatically from 22% in 1991 to 8% in 1996. Employment in the agricultural and services sector increased, but not enough to compensate for the jobs lost in industry. This period saw the significant growth of two new social phenomena: emigration and unemployment. In 1993, the latter peaked at 22% of the eligible work force.

The real achievements of economic reform, while positively received by international institutions, were seen as a political triumph and not a dynamic process with an innate cycle of rise and fall. Unresolved problems such as privatisation and reform in financial and institutional system were not frankly debated with a wider public. Key factors pushing Albania towards its crisis were publicly-acknowledged corruption in public services and an equivocal legal system that should have fought harder against illicit activities. At the time, regional economic and political conditions encouraged illegal activity, especially smuggling. The state's inadequate approach to crime and its failure to discover and disclose the truth about investments in dubious pyramid schemes fostered discontent among the people. This discontent reached new heights by the end of 1996 and intensified further in the first months of 1997.

Other problems lay in the economic situation that emerged in 1997. This was so dire it eclipsed all other concerns. It was brought about by a number of causes: inherited weak economic foundations, a backward banking system, a total absence of capital markets and under-developed institutions. Unemployment soared again from 12.3% in 1996 to 14.9% in 1997. Extreme poverty was rife – with income per capita at 85,600 Lek (Albanian currency) in 1996 – so Albania's economic transition came to be seen as one of the most painful among all post-communist countries.

The first sign of the crisis that peaked in 1997 was a rapid decay of economic indicators starting in mid-June 1996. During that year, inflation jumped again to 17- 18%, while the budget deficit had grown from 7% of the gross domestic product in 1994 to 12% in 1996. This highlighted the frailty of the economy. Far from a macroeconomic equilibrium, it was also clear that the microeconomic reforms were built on sand.

The second sign of the coming crisis was the onset of a financial upheaval, which occurred about when the pyramid investment firms halted their activities. The public had invested on an immense scale - in fact, Albanian citizens, both in and out the country, had used up all their savings – and, when the crash came, it accelerated the advent of the general economic and socio-political crisis. The key feature of this informal credit market was a tempting but unjustifiably high rate of interest. Despite the fluctuations of the banking system's interest rates between 1991 and 1995, they were always an average five to six times lower than those offered by the informal credit market.

As we can see from the above description, the transition to democracy for Albania was longer and harder than expected.

Why is the term ***transition*** more appropriate than ***change*** for Albania at this time? As we understand it, there is a crucial difference between the two words.

Change is a descriptive word: it clearly implies aims of actions, sufficient knowledge of available resources, possible capacities for planning, scope to set up new intermediate institutions, and positive results that derive from taking and implementing decisions. *Change* assumes a country has clear priorities, consensus on those priorities, interacting mutually supporting policies in different fields, and proper assessment of human resources at a time when external aid is needed to improve the quality of human life.

Transition, on the other hand, is characterised by chaotic developments, from the loss of social norms and traditional administrative structures, from political leaders losing their credibility various institutions becoming increasingly isolated from the forward thrust of society.

The events of 1991 were such that Albania could not switch from one route to change to another. In fact, the events created chaos, the duration and results of which were then unforeseeable.

In transition, the priorities are different for different groups. The aims of policies are invisible or contradictory and likely to obviate each other. The level of institutional stability is very low, because traditional institutions cannot withstand the onslaught of new circumstances while new institutions are incapable of reacting to governmental attempts for co-ordination.

Given this concept of change and transition, we describe the process of replacing one form of regime with another in Albania ***as transition.***

Some characteristics of Albanian transition that have directly influenced the exclusion of different groups from mainstream society are:

a. ***Intra societal conflict***. Many people think that harmful state policies are arbitrary. The conflict over land privatisation is a good example of this. Here, the number of those abusing the law rises. Different groups of the population begin to lose confidence in the government. Opposition to existing institutions increases, sometimes to the point of armed uprising. Corruption increases as well, because many people think it the only way to survive or get rich quickly. And, in a society where conflict and tension exist, scant attention is paid to those at risk.

b. ***Challenges to existing institutions.*** This is related to the first characteristic. The less safe people feel with their institutions and elected representatives, the more they try to oppose them. Existing institutions haven't the strength to face this challenge, and are not equipped to make plans for those in risk. And this is why, even now, we are aware that different institutions have no policies to help and protect those at risk.

c. ***Institutional instability.*** The second characteristic leads to institutions that must be replaced as they can not face today's challenges. This has been the case in Albania for several years now. Institutions simply have not had the time, and resources to plan and carry out projects to help those in need.

d. ***Loss of human resources.*** Qualified, highly educated people are now seeking new ways of life because they are short of resources and miss the respect due to them. This situation becomes acute when teachers and doctors start leaving or seek alternative options in the country. This diaspora affects rural and suburban areas the most. In rural areas, it is now hard to find trained teachers with university degrees. Those that stay on are either very old and find it impossible to keep up with changes in the education system - or they have no other options as they are poor teachers. In some areas, community representatives cannot find any candidates properly suited

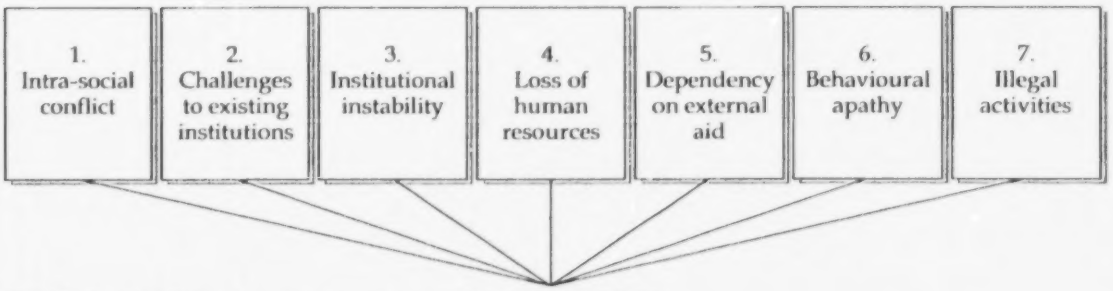
to teaching. This has had - and is still having – a serious effect on the education of our future citizens. This mostly affects rural areas, but it also impinges on some urban areas. The best teachers have now left the profession to set up their own businesses or to work privately from home. The poor education given to students today will reverberate down the years with future generations finding it hard to accomplish the tasks of a society in development. The doctor drain is affecting the country's health in the same way. With less health care, people are exposed to far more health risks. This affects their general well being and also depletes the energy and resilience they need to face the difficulties attendant on a society in transition. Their living standards are nose-diving, and they are increasingly dependent on external resources and leads disaffection and alienation. In summary, serious loss of human resources has put more people at risk of social exclusion or already banished them to that condition.

e. ***Dependency on external aid.*** Most of the time, government and non-governmental organisations conform to overseas requirements for fear of losing such external aid as we get. As a result, there are very few social services so people live on very tight budgets – and are at risk of social exclusion.

f. ***Behavioural apathy***. People lack self-confidence. They do not trust institutions, they are scared of corruption, and they turn to illegal activities to line their pockets, and are unable to catch up with social changes. They become fatalistic, their self-esteem plummets, and they become ripe for social exclusion.

g. ***Illegal and criminal activities.*** All these characteristics develop alongside, and because of, changes in social norms and values. People unable to adjust to these changes, are liable to be excluded. In other words, they form "vulnerable groups".

Conceptual scheme of transition and vulnerability
State of transition



Conflicting traditional norms – – – – – VULNERABILITY

(Adapted from World Bank Report on Groups in Risk, 1999)

Identification of disadvantaged groups

Social exclusion marginalises people by rejection. These two conditions create a vicious circle: excluded people become marginalised and marginalised people become excluded. These two situations have created five groups of excluded or potentially excluded people in Albania. To identify them, we use criteria to assess the level of exclusion and level of risk they face.

These criteria include:

- **Permanent and temporary marginalisation. This also relates to the long- term isolation that they experience.** People can lose touch with the labour market, experience a certain level of

poverty, or have difficulties in participating effectively in economic, political, and social life. But they are not necessarily social excluded. Only when this situation continues over a long period and renders reintegration unlikely are people classed as socially excluded.

- **Relative size of population in risk.** We do not identify every group of people that experience such difficulties as socially excluded. When the number of people is fairly large, we can refer to a social group as poor, unemployed or, in the case of women afflicted by domestic violence, as abused - but they are not necessarily "socially excluded".
- **The possibility that they influence the workings of governmental institutions and inter-society relations.** The second criterion takes us to the third. When the number of people at risk or already excluded is of sizeable proportions, the chances are they will put pressure on governmental institutions and attract the attention of different political parties and groups. That way, they will be used as "political capital" for a time, especially during an election.

The five groups identified come from different social and cultural backgrounds. They may be similarly placed but they do not have the same group identity. In this context, what connects the uneducated Roma (gypsy) child with the rural child that drops out of school is the fact that they both are threatened by long term social isolation because of lack of education.

The groups identified as excluded or in danger of being excluded are:

1. Children
   - children that drop out of school
   - institutionalised and abandoned children
   - street children
2. Young people who do not attend school and are unemployed, and are therefore at risk of embarking on a life of crime
3. Women and girls who are victims of violence and prostitution
4. Disabled people, old and lonely people
5. Unemployed and poor

3. Analyses of risk groups

This following chapter will serve to analyse the situation of different groups and subgroups at risk.

3.1 *Children*

Different subgroups within the group of socially excluded children.

Children that drop out of school

School abandonment puts an increasing number of children at risk of social isolation, begging in the streets of Italy and Greece and, in the case of girls, to sexual abuse. Truancy also heralds the return of illiteracy, lack of earning power and a decline in general education. The number of drop-outs is rising for various reasons. These include the decay of the infrastructure, irregularities caused by emigration, lack of social order, child labour, and lack of confidence in the existing educational system to offer proper social and economic orientation. When interviewed about drop-outs, people said:

"Education is a basis for life, but books are expensive and schools are not well equipped. There is no heating system."

"Children are not safe on their way to school. We have had cases of kidnapping, and the police being unable to do anything."

"We go to school only to pass the time. The school is destroyed, so we cannot attend classes normally. Young boys from the village come and visit the school and harass the girls and no one stops them."

Years ago, education was thought of as very important; it was an investment for a better life, a better job and a better marriage. However, although primary and elementary education is still compulsory, more and more children are dropping out. This happens for various reasons. These include families migrating to urban areas, the time they take to adjust to the new environment, children proving unacceptable to other children because of differences in language (dialect), culture, mindsets and ways of life. Families also put pressure on children to earn money. They lose confidence in school and the way education is meant to equip them for a better life. Furthermore, lack of security means parents are afraid of send their daughters to school for fear of their being kidnapped and trafficked to Italy or Greece. There are all too few community organisations to help families in difficulties. People have problems adjusting their education to labour market needs. Schools have inflexible schedules. And, because so many adults have emigrated, there are not enough family members to work in the house and on the farm. These are just some of the reasons for this outbreak of drop-outs in Albania. It will have an appalling impact on a whole generation and the country. Studying this phenomenon, we saw that:

1. School attendance is irregular in suburban areas. Students miss 30- 40 % of their school days and classes. They attend 2 to 3 classes per day. Lack of social order means girls' education is more at risk than that of boys.

2. The education of farmers' children, especially in remote mountain areas, is also at risk. Parents force children to miss school and help earn money for the family.
3. Children of families that have moved to Tirana or other big cities are in danger of dropping out. Because these families are not registered as citizens in these areas, officials make no attempt to enrol their children in school. Sometimes schools are too distant to be reached on foot.
4. Geographically, some urban zones are likely to suffer low school attendances. These are in the North Western and South Eastern parts (Lezha, Shkodra, Korca).
5. The official data reveal little about drop-outs in fast-developing suburban areas. People in these areas adduce poor school attendance as evidence of severe social problems.
6. Areas where schools are destroyed and teachers have left for new jobs are in greater risk raising the incidence of drop-outs.
7. Armed boys lurking near schools mean that girls are more in danger of dropping out in both rural and urban areas. With so little security, society now feels altogether much more vulnerable.
8. The United Nations International Children in Emergency Fund has data that show school attendance is a problem not only at elementary, but also at high and university, level - with only 43% of students attending school regularly.
9. Dropping out is likely to rise in rural areas because many people are leaving.
10. Roma children are more in at risk of dropping out because their families are itinerant, and they cannot finish elementary school and are thus disqualified from higher levels of education.
11. Because teachers are paid so little (only $US50-70 per month) they are under-motivated and fail to stimulate their students.

Given our knowledge of this subject and public reaction to it, state and civil society must do much more to prevent dropping out. Up to a point, something is being done.

The authorities at the Soros Foundation (Albania Education Development Programme-AEDP) have studied the educational needs of people who have recently moved into several areas in Tirana. Based on their researches, they have built several model schools in these areas and in Vlora and Rrogozhina. They have also assessed social needs in Bathore, Paskuqan and the Babru district of Tirana district.

The Soros Foundation is also committed to reconstructing and building several schools all over the country. The aim is to improve the infrastructure and enable children to learn in a normal and more educational environment.

They have also run several courses to help teachers to adjust to a new society and the needs of the students. Teaching hours must be more flexible so students can to come to school and also help their families in various ways. These Soros projects supplied schools with new technology and made learning more practical. Clearly, if we meet the specific needs of these children, we are more likely to save them from dropping out and becoming socially excluded.

Institutionalised and abandoned children

Children feel weak when they are rejected by their families because of sickness, disabilities or other difficulties. Their number continues to increase because parents, especially single mothers, emigrate abroad; parents divorce and leave the country because of the difficult economic situation; parents turn to crime and go to prison; parents also go through difficult experiences and develop addictions

to various substances. These circumstances have cursed numerous children and, through them, will have a dreadful long-term impact on the country's economy, our institutions and inter-social relations. That's why we must urgently help these children with policies, services and projects. Based on our data, we know that services for this group are very limited and, even when they exist, they function inadequately. Adoption is very rare, because Albanians prefer blood-related children.

Institutionalised children tend to be socially excluded and, given the sort of help they have had so far, there is little hope for them. They do not have families and, in Albania, that means they are denied the support and respect of others; while their mothers are "recognised", their children are stigmatised as illegitimate; they are socially excluded, do not enjoy equal rights with the other children and because of their low grades they cannot go to high school. If they go to very low level vocational schools, their teachers take no interest in them and their motivation plummets. They marry within their group and have no hope of escaping from it. They are more exposed to sexual abuse, especially the girls, and, once they are 16, they have no support.

In conclusion:

1. while institutionalised children are growing in number, they are not getting proper official attention and attempts to care for them are inadequate;
2. the sanitary conditions of institutions for orphans, handicapped and abandoned children are very poor. They live in dirty, wrecked overpopulated places;
3. there are some 1,150 orphans in institutions with only untrained staff;
4. the number of children abandoned in large coastal cities is growing. Both boys and girls have limited educational options. After 16, they all have to work. Without a proper education and with no job opportunities, the outlook for the rest of their lives is unpromising.

The number of children in institutions is far less than that of those living with relatives because their parents have died or emigrated. If the resources for them existed, there are some 15,000 children who should be in institutions. Apart from a few cases when parents were working when they died, most of these children do not receive any pension or other financial support from the state.

Different projects run by religious foundations, especially foreign projects, have proved these children can do as well as any others when they receive support. Some American missions, for example, Hope for the World in Tirana, offered financial support and housing for a limited number of children. They could go to school after the age of 16, get trained and find a job. Various other foundations have followed suit in other cities. So far, 4,547 children have been supported in this way.

Given special training and courses, these children develop as well as other children who live at home and have many more advantages. Different interviews convinced us that, to improve living conditions for these children, their teachers and carers needed more training. Depressingly, their current teachers and carers lack even basic education on the psychological development of children and have no real vocation to work with children with special needs. So these children, who have been through one trauma after another, have no hope of recovering from them.

Street children

The phenomenon of street children is relatively new to Albania as it only began to manifest itself in 2000. Nowadays, there are street children in Albania and Albanian street children in other countries. While some are victims of the international Mafia network that controls our regions, others are victims of family poverty. While interviewing some of them for this report, we found that some are begging to keep their families. Their parents are sick, incapable of working, alcoholic, and mentally

ill, without qualifications or have other problems and the children are forced onto the street. But at least they have a roof over their heads and some sort of family.

Another group has nowhere to go at night so they live and work in the street. They are all at risk of illness, abuse and maltreatment. They are also likely to be exploited by criminal gangs. Indeed, gangs take the children to other countries to work for so- called "protectors". At the end of 1998, official sources stated there were 800 Albanian children in Italy, trafficked there and used by criminal gangs. They are forced to beg for food and clothes and, as a reward, they sometimes get beaten up, tortured, even killed. According to some data sources, about 2,900 of these are in Greece. Some say they were sold by their families. True or not, these children urgently need special attention. While describing the misadventures of street children, we distinguish between those with and those without homes. Although their situations overlap, we must bear this in mind.

"We were seven children at home and dad was always sick. Mom could not go to work. She had to take care of all of us. I started working in the street. Sometimes I was cleaning the windows of the expensive cars, at other times I was helping my neighbours to clean their store. Sometimes, I was helping people move furniture and stuff. This is how I could take some money home. One day, one of the toughest in our neighbourhood came to me and told me that he would take me to Greece to make more money. I told him 'no', because I had people at home waiting for me. One cold winter morning, when I was outdoors cleaning one of the stores, he came with his car, pulled me inside and took me to an unknown place. I stayed there only a couple of days and after that I found myself in the middle of Athens. I was forced to go 'to work' every morning, either begging or stealing. I had to make at least 10 thousand drachmas (Greek currency) every day. If not, I knew how hard it was. I had no right to eat. I could sleep outdoors and be bitten to death. One day I was able to escape and left for Thessaloniki to work for myself. I continued to do the same job and made lots of money for my family. I came back to see my family when I knew that the tough man had died, shot by his friends. I am going back to work. I cannot do any other job." (As told by a boy of 14 from Berati)

Research has brought home to us how much these children need education and training. They come from an underclass with minimal incomes and missed even their basic education because they were working for their families, or because their parents ignored their education. However, there are some positive experiences to report.

The SHEFT project for street children has been going for several years now in Tirana. Children without families, abandoned by them or at risk of abuse at home, can stay at the shelter, go to school and get some vocational training. So at least some children have a chance to learn and avoid abuse.

Ferilasses is a day centre for street children. Instead of begging in the street, these children are collected and brought together at the day centre. Here, they get some basic education, training and vocational training to help them get work. Both they and their parents find the centre a diverting and pleasant place.

While these case histories are encouraging, there is nothing like enough of them meet the needs of all the children. While the greatest concentration of these children is in the capital, where there are some facilities to help them, there are groups of them in other cities where there is help for them.

All the initiatives to improve the children's lives seem to come from private citizens, while both government and public organisations are painfully slow to do anything for them. So we must be glad the Albanian public is so aware of the children's problems and so ready to help.

3.2 *Young people in danger of embracing criminal behaviours*

This group is relatively new to Albania. Like mobsters everywhere, they believe a man can be brave if he knows how to use a gun. It is also a by-product of insecurity during transition and the inability of the police and the courts to enforce the law. The youngsters ignore their elders who advise them to work hard and make sacrifices. With no parental authority, they feel free, rebel against their parents and join gangs that use violence to gain fear and respect and make money fast. They make up the group that is most urgently in need of training in practical skills. At a conservative estimate, 25% of 18-25s are involved in criminal activity. Though seasonal emigration eases their plight a little, young people in rural, mountainous areas, have little or no hope of improving their economic status. They also have little confidence in the government's capacity to improve their lives. That is why they see criminal behaviour as a step forward, as a way of helping their families and themselves. The criminal economy is becoming a key part of social and economic life, and it is bound to have a long-term effect in Albania.

Our conclusions about this group are as follows

1. Young, uneducated, unemployed people in the suburban and coastal areas are more in danger of indulging in criminal activity, from smuggling to female trafficking.
2. Young people that live in isolated areas, with little or no hope of employment and self-development are at risk of being caught up in illegal activities, mainly with female trafficking.
3. Young people with prison records must have special training and support if they are to re-integrate with society.
4. Reverting to the old tradition of blood revenge, the conflicts among different families, especially on property issues, encourages these groups to be armed and ready for illegal action.
5. Their low level of education prevents them from understanding the law and civilised behaviour.

For all these reasons and many more, this group is in urgent need of education and vocational training. It is the only way to save their lives. Unfortunately, they have no work experience – and this makes it hard to help them.

Young people in danger of using drugs

This group formed more recently than the young people described above. It was mostly concentrated in the capital, Tirana, and in other larger urban centres, but is now rapidly spreading to smaller towns. Albania is becoming a clearing house for drugs in Europe. Cannabis is cultivated in the south, and heroin comes from Turkey. Drug-taking is now a symbol status for the young in urban and suburban areas. Meanwhile, legislation on drug use is still scrappy and obscure. Unofficial estimates put the number of drug addicts in Albania at around 30,000, with a third of them (10,000) in Tirana. According to press articles and official announcements, this statistic is increasing as time passes because

(a) drug traffickers tend to become drug addicts;

(b) low quality cannabis and Turkish heroin, produced for the Albanian market, are consumed by an urban elite that sees drug consumption as a sign of status;

(c) these young people need special education on the risks they run by using drugs as well as training on how to approach the labour market.

Initiatives do exist. In Tirana, young people go to centres where they can talk to friends, learn computer skills, divert themselves, and receive information on job vacancies and opportunities, etc.

3.3 *Women victims of gender abuse*

During the transition period, women's autonomy was compromised. They lost their jobs, had no financial resources and became more dependent on their husbands, who were the only breadwinners in the family. They now have no right to take decisions in the family, and any attempt to assert themselves might end in abuse. Most of them cannot afford to live on their own; even when they can, they are social outcasts.

A woman who is divorced or otherwise separated from her husband and unable to return to her original family can easily turn to prostitution. Various welfare services can provide cases that show how difficult it is for a single mother or a divorced woman to lead an independent life. The traditional Albanian family code still states that daughters must marry and, once married, honour requires that she stay with her husband through thick and thin.

The changes in Albanian society discussed under the heading "Context" have made women's lives much harder. More and more women are staying at home and raising their children, while their husbands work abroad. Still more women stay at home and undergo various abuses from husbands who are often involved in illegal activities. These women might be better placed financially at home, but their emotional state is unenviable. Sometimes, they have to put up with brutality because they have no resources to go elsewhere. In rural areas, the situation of women is harder still. They do rough work in the field, partly because men are not home, partly because women are expected to do all kinds of work. Their education and traditions prevent them from realising how badly their husbands and other members of the family are treating them. Women in rural areas are also forced to marry people nominated by their parents and relatives. This old tradition is fraught with new hazards. Sometimes, after the prearranged marriage, they are sent to Italy or Greece to work for their "protectors". Girls from poor areas of the Northern and North Eastern parts of Albania seem to be the worse placed.

This is understandable in view of the severely restricted scope for a better life in these regions. The unemployment rate is very high. Job possibilities are very limited. They have virtually no hope of moving to other parts of the country, so marriage to somebody that lives and works abroad is probably their best bet. Whether the marriage works or not, at least there is some sort of hope at the start.

Once involved in prostitution, these poor women, young girls, divorced mothers, whatever, suffer social exclusion first from their own families.

A recently published book details the nightmarish experiences of trafficked women from Eastern Europe. Written by the Italian journalists, Emanuela Moroli and Roberta Sibona, *Slaves of the West* (Schiave d'occidente) is the best account of how these women and girls get involved in prostitution. Lack of proper education, lack of knowledge and lack of a supportive network, make them victims of trafficking. When interviewed, the girls explained why and how they got caught up in prostitution. They came from poor families that, whether small or large, had no men. They had no protection, learned no working skills and did not have the education to face social change. They all said that, if they had any hope of getting a job, if they could only get some training, if their families could only give them some support, they would never have become prostitutes.

Analysing their situation, everyone agrees that basic educational training courses, training in working skills, support to help them set up their own businesses and become independent, would really help them.

The following list of civil groups and initiatives is not exhaustive, it just gives a few examples of the ways in which women can help each other.

In August 1994, the Women's Centre was created. Its aims are to co-ordinate women's non-governmental organisation activities; to offer advice and wage public awareness campaigns on gender issues; and create a documentation centre.

The Women's Legal Group gathers the expertise of professional women to review legislation from a gender perspective.

The non-governmental organisation, Reflexione, carries out activities in line with its policies. In 1995, it launched a campaign to raise awareness of and to fight domestic violence. Currently, it is working on a project to promote self-employment of women. It has links with many businesses that offer work to women without family support.

The Linea Counselling Centre, started in October 1996, offers psychological assistance and facilitates legal and medical referrals through a telephone hot line.

A Shelter Home, set up in November 1998 and funded by the Italian Government, offers shelter and support to victims of domestic violence and other kinds of abuse. Other branches of the counselling centre are established in Shkodra, Pogradec and Elbasan.

The Advice Centre for Abused Women and Girls offers legal advice and help in court for women without financial resources.

The Family Planning Association advises on family planning and safe abortion in several clinics in the country.

Land O' Lake, an American foundation, trains rural women to work together and make more money by selling increased quantities of their dairy products. This project has run for several years and proved successful in various parts of the country.

Italian non-governmental organisations funded by the Italian government, run training projects that help women, especially those from rural areas, to be self- employed and develop their own traditional skills and handicrafts.

Other projects, such as those of the International Labour Organisation, train people to start small private businesses. These projects are discussed in the section on unemployment.

Educating women and training them to work are the best ways to protect them from abuse and trafficking.

3.4 *Elderly and disabled people*

The transition period has even affected the elderly in Albania. The number of abandoned old people is growing due to their children moving to other parts of the country or overseas. Their monthly allowance is nothing like enough to meet their needs, and that is why they get *groceries on credit in anticipation of getting their pensions.* Of course, when the pension comes, they have already spent it on the food they have eaten so they still have no money. In an even worse way are widows who have never worked and have no children to support them. They receive only a small percentage of their

dead husbands' pensions, far too little to cover their needs. We believe the elderly are now members of an ever-increasing group of marginalised people in our society. Their number is still low compared with other European countries, but it is likely to rise. The situation is still worse for families of two or three generations: if the younger members are unemployed, they are forced to live off the pensions of the elderly. When asked about their status, they said:

We are dead. Nobody cares for us. We have nothing in our hands. We have lost respect for ourselves. We are a burden for our children. We are useless.

One of the most powerful traditions amongst urban and rural populations is for families to share a household. This derives in part from the housing shortage. It is also due to the Albanian belief that the younger generation should look after the older generation. They should sacrifice their individual well-being in the interests of the family as a whole: 25 % of Albanian families are large, comprising over six people each.

Based on our research, we conclude:

- Old people are more at risk without children to support them or without any one abroad to help them.
- Old people in rural areas living on their own are more at risk of social exclusion.
- Old people looking after grandchildren (because the parents have left to work abroad or the families are dysfunctional) are also at risk of exclusion.
- With young couples increasingly living on their own, more and more old people are also living alone. According to the data from the United Nations International Children in Emergency Fund, families with two generations have gone down from 24% of the total number of families in 1979 to 16% in 1989.
- About 7,500 elderly people need to be institutionalised, but there are only a limited number of projects and services for them.

Sadly, there is no project to give them a chance of employment, even part time. So, even though some of them are strong and active, they have no hope of financial independence. Due to the country's economic difficulties and the high unemployment rate, we cannot devise ways to employ older people.

Disabled people

The disabled are classified as a subgroup of the fourth category of excluded groups. This is because there are not that many of them and - together with the elderly - they can easily be included if they are trained for employment and re-employment. Disabled people are defined as those born with a disability or disabled before they are 21. They receive a flat rate allowance of 70 % of the minimum wage, with no means test (Act no. 7710/18.05.1993). The medical commission of Social Insurance Institute usually determines the disability.

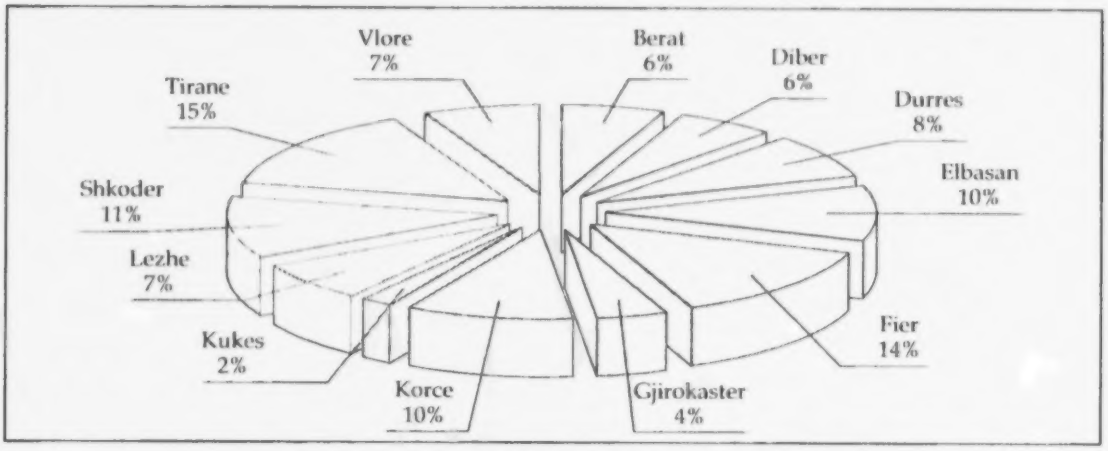
To promote disabled people integrating into economic and social life, the disabled who work at least five years in the state sector receive an increased allowance of 150% of the minimum wage, those attending middle (high) school get 200%, and those at higher (university type) schools get 300%.

The disability allowance goes to everyone who has a statement from a medical legal commission declaring their eligibility for benefit.

While we know roughly how many of them there are and something of their educational level, we do not have enough data to assess their situation. This table shows where they are in the country.

Geographic distribution

District	Disabled	Population	% of population
Berat	1703	253,182	0.67%
Diber	1753	257,776	0.68%
Durres	2304	262,345	0.87%
Elbasan	3054	421,984	0.72%
Fier	4054	451,241	0.89%
Gjirokaster	1247	169,210	0.73%
Korce	2796	349,144	0.8%
Kukes	725	168,554	0.43%
Lezhe	1916	204,232	0.93%
Shkoder	3135	322,545	0.97%
Tirane	4618	703,961	0.65%
Vlore	2091	302,267	0.69%



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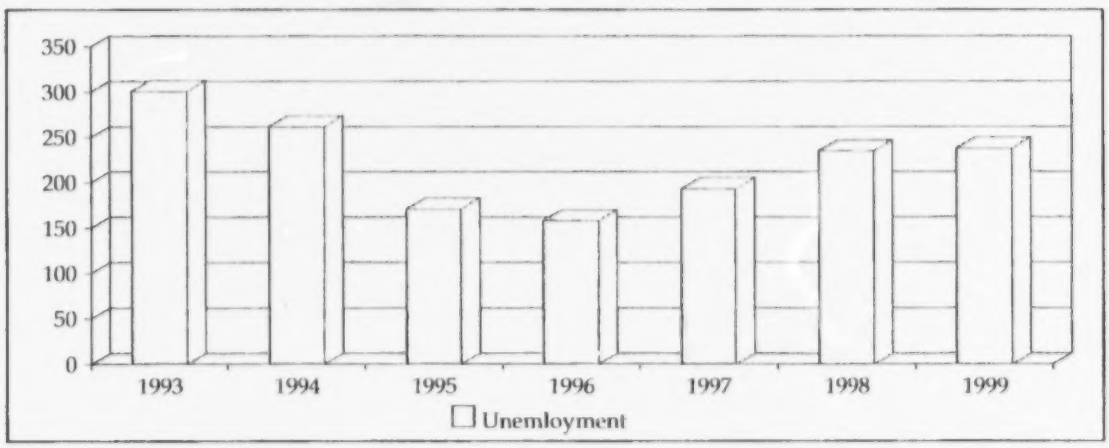
3.5 *Unemployed and poor people*

Large-scale unemployment is new to Albania. It largely derives from the privatisation process and the general re-orientation of the existing industrial and production activities. During the communist period, the concentration of heavy industry in certain areas generated urban centres. So, when these industries were declared inefficient and closed down, unemployment in these areas soared. The people concerned were used to life-long jobs and were in no way prepared to seek alternative employment. As a result, according to the Labour Offices, the transition period caused unemployment to rocket up to 17% of the total Albanian workforce. While assessing the unemployment rate, we must bear in mind that numerous workers were not listed as they had not signed on as unemployed. From early 1998 to August 1999, the unemployment rate was 23,500 to 23,800 people or 17 % of the labour force.



Unemployment in Albania is unusually distributed across the country.

If we classify districts according to the ratio of unemployed people to total work force, the highest level of unemployment is in Kucove with 44.6% (oil processing industry was there), Lac with 42.6% (chemical industry was there), Shkoder with 31.1% (copper industry was there).

The following districts are above average:

- Northern Albania - Kukes with 21.3% (still has a mining industry, mainly chrome ore), Tropoje with 20.8% (as Kukes), Puke with 27.9%.
- Middle Albania - Elbasan with 20.3%, Gramsh with 21.5%, Kavaje with 23%.
- Southern Albania - Pogradec with 29.2%, Skrapar with 28.1%, Berat with 22.2%, Vlore with 22.2%).

Unemployment mostly affects young people and women.

According to statistics from Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), the highest incidence of unemployment is amongst the young people. Indeed, 21-34 age group makes up 45.2% of all unemployed. There are several reasons for this. First, the labour market demands much more of this age group. Second, given their age, this group is expected to be employed. Sociologists confirm this is the time of life to tackle occupational challenges. So they are all looking for jobs or training of any kind that will lead to a career. That's why they register for jobs at labour offices. The unemployment rate for over 34s is 41.8 % of all unemployed while the rate for under-21s is 13%.

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Unemployed women comprise 111,308 out of a total of 238,440 (47.7%).

The extent of unemployment changes according to educational level. Unemployed people with primary and elementary education account for 47.5% of all unemployed, 49.6% have a high school education, and only 2.8% have higher education.

Those with a high school education have a chance of finding a job and receive employment training and/or benefit from different employment courses. Those most at risk of unemployment are those of low education. They do not have enough training to meet the needs of the labour market. In fact, most of them still require the basic training that qualifies them for occupational training.

The least unemployed group comprises those with tertiary education. This is because, first, the skills of highly educated people are much sought after and, second, such people are well equipped to find work or set up on their own. On the other hand, it is tragic that so many Albanian intellectuals and people with top qualifications are leaving the country because security is so poor and the future so uncertain. This state of affairs confronts the Albanian Government with a serious challenge.

Endemic in Albania is long term unemployment, which mostly affects women and young people. This group comprises everyone who has been looking for a job for over a year. They currently number 210,000, 88% of all registered unemployed. Sadly, we do not know enough about the sub-groups within this large group or we would introduce courses to match the needs of the different categories of jobless. We also need to know how long every long term unemployed person has been without work. That way, we can arrange suitable training for them.

People in rural areas are classified as self-employed because they make a living from the land and other agricultural activities. But there are signs that many of them are looking for jobs and/or emigrating to other countries because they do not make enough from farming. Add these people to the total number of unemployed and the statistic is even more serious.

According to some Labour Office predictions, 50 business are going to close down in 2000 or at least reduce productivity so that 2,800 work places will have to go. In the public sector, due to privatisation, Telecom, the Electricity Corporation and transport organisations will declare 2,500 redundancies in the course of the year 2000.

4. Policy provision

Given today's society in transition, institutions representing the Albanians have an unfocused role in society. At the same time, there are still only a few intermediate social organisations such as civil society organisations, for example, and they act in very limited areas. Several parts of the country, especially those in the Northern and Eastern parts, are run by large families and tribal groups; these control local administration, and are in contact with administrative institutions at the centre. Those who are excluded or in danger of being excluded suffer from tribal relations and are virtually unrepresented in the political life of the country. These groups urgently need to make their case, but seem regrettably incapable of doing so.

As in all western countries, trade unions should play a key role in securing social protection and social inclusion for people but, sadly, they have been destroyed by the closure of the state industry sector. As a result, the industrial and agricultural sectors are still in the hands of families and micro enterprises. With the press busy supporting different political factions, scant coverage goes to the nation's social problems and possible solutions to them. And, although both Muslim and Christian leaders express their views on issues such as abortion and education, religion does not officially play a significant role in the country.

As a result, it is left to informal groups to decide which target groups should receive support.

At a central level, the institution currently responsible for meeting the needs of groups in danger is the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The Ministry operates with the Department of Social Policies and two other independent entities: the Department of National Service for Employment and the General Administration of Social Services. The main budget for this Ministry comes from the Ministry of Finances, but there are moves to raise funds from foreign donors. The Ministry is virtually the country's only financial source for social programmes.

At a local level, the Ministry carries out the programmes of the Department of National Service for Employment and General Administration of Social Services. It does this through two groups of inspectors. The group of inspectors for employment was set up in September 1993. It has 70 employees - 35% of whom are women - and 29 local offices. For the time being, the task of this group is to control private companies that consist of one or two self employed people. "Control" applies mainly to safety conditions at work and social security payments.

The second group of inspectors is employed by the General Administration. There are 51 assigned to social services, 10 in Tirana and 41 in other parts of the country. The inspectors are all university graduates, but do not always have experience in social work. They control the implementation of social services programmes and advise communes on social assistance. It also has some representatives attached to charity organisations under the jurisdiction of the ministry. As yet, this ministry has not briefed any social workers to assess the situation of groups in danger and prepare courses for them.

We have analysed various measures and courses related to vocational education and training, and offered by the state as ways of combating social exclusion. These are our conclusions.

The Government offers limited social services through public institutions such as orphanages and old people's centres. There are some very small orphanages with restricted accommodation in

Tirana, Elbasan, Berat, Korce, Shkoder and Saranda. Their condition is now markedly improved thanks to the support of the Austrian, Italian, German and British non-governmental organisations including SOS village, Hope for the World, Street Children and SHEFT. Because beds are so few, many abandoned children are placed in hospitals. Many cities are in dire need of services of this kind - or any other foster system for children without family support.

The orphanages do not have any special arrangements for training children with a view to future employment. Children at these institutions attend regular schools with regular courses which they sometimes find very hard. When they do not succeed at school, these children drop out and abandon education. This paves the way to social isolation and exclusion later in life.

The government does not seem to have any concrete projects for young people and abused women. While the present government has promised to protect women's rights and create equal opportunities for them, it has yet to do anything concrete.

There are 22 public institutions in the country. They include five residential homes for homeless and abandoned old people. These accommodate 300 people; there are 30 on the waiting list, and 7,500 have applied for entry. There are seven centres for disabled people. Unfortunately, the buildings and facilities are in a very poor state. The government admits there are 27,000 disabled people, 6,000 of them in need of specific and long-term treatment that is unobtainable in Albania.

4.1 *The programme of services for elderly people*

Principles

The programme for the protection, support and integration of elderly people, who live by themselves or in difficult economic conditions, is based on the relevant legislation (act no.7710). This determines the ways in which protection support and integration are provided by 24-hour social services in national institutions of a residential type. Despite their manner of funding, the service to the clients is free of charge in the cases when they do not have incomes or when these incomes are insufficient. The clients, who have some income, have the right to request additional services, if they need them.

Qualifying conditions

The law states that the elderly must be admitted to public welfare homes free of charge so long as they are homeless, with no income and live alone.

Information about the programme of protection of the elderly

Type of protection	Number of institutions	Number of beneficiaries	Expenditures (000/leke/year)	Support staff
Elderly centres	5	235	42.634	115

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4.2 *Public training for adults*

Lifelong training is one of the weakest points of the training system – given that the whole workforce is in dire need of it as a result of upheavals in jobs and work patterns.

The formal system consists of seven centres set up in 1992. These provide poor training which, in many cases, is not even relevant to the actual needs of the Albanian labour market. These courses do not always make people more employable nor do they teach skills that are currently in demand.

Vocational training centres get 40% of their students from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs employment services and 60% from the community. These students are usually already employed and keen to upgrade their working skills with a view to future promotion or other job opportunities.

The system is not market driven, and there is no assessment of its efficiency as to the number of those employed after graduation. The vocational training centres have no student follow-up system at all. However, they estimate that the employment rate of their graduates fluctuates between 40% and 60%.

There is no evaluation system. Success largely hinges on the motivation of the individual. The character of the courses depends on the equipment available, which is not the same as that used by local industry. The relationship with local businesses is very weak and sometimes non-existent. In fact, local businesses never turn to vocational training centres for training. If businesses and trade unions were involved in running the centres, their relationships would be more robust and the centres would perform better.

Some organisations – for example, GTZ and the International Labour Organisation – work with the government to provide initiatives that create work and self-employment for the unemployed. These benefactors mostly aim to give Labour Office staff crash courses that enable them to deal with unemployment issues. Currently, the International Labour Organisation is running a project to teach trainers in local administration to handle socially excluded groups. Until now, the impact of these projects has not been assessed.

The International Labour Organisation is planning to launch a project that combats child labour. At present, we have no concrete information about this project.

A direct intervention in the labour market, the World Bank project on labour market development in Albania was implemented through the Training Enterprise and Employment Fund.

Under the Governmental Decision No. 220, dated May 10,1993, the "Training, Enterprise and Employment Fund" was established in order to encourage training in Albania that related to labour market needs. The Fund was to serve as a gateway for different projects of employment, self-employment and training. From the start up till now, the Fund has carried out 275 sub-projects in all the categories mentioned above. The budget for all these sub-projects was US$1,700,000.

The project's three main components were adapted from the National Observatory's Annual Report for 1999.

1. Projects for employment (with two sub-categories)

1. Under the Job Insertion Project, 198 sub-projects went ahead, and 9,007 people benefited from them. The employment rate of these programmes was 80% or 7,187 people.
2. Job creation activity began in December 1996 to support the development of the labour market in rural and poor areas of Albania. The project was based on sub-projects proposed by local

governments or non-governmental organisations in rural areas or small towns. Under these projects, the Training Enterprise and Employment Fund carried out 53 sub-projects with the following results:

- 3,200 people employed from social assistance beneficiaries;
- the average duration of sub-projects was three months;
- total budget, US$ 792,939, cost per participant, US$ 248.

2. *Institutional training*

This kind of training took place in a training centre and aimed mostly to prepare the better educated unemployed to start up their own businesses. The training covered four key areas: hairdressing and cosmetics; construction; food processing and beverage; confectionery. There were 31 sub-projects with 1,166 unemployed in training. The percentage of the trainees subsequently self-employed or employed was 40% of the total.

There were 24 other sub-projects of institutional training set up for 2000 trainees. The employment rate was 40 %, 15% more than expected. The training for each participant cost US$200.

3. *Self-employment projects (with two sub-projects)*

1. Four business clubs were created in four different cities: Durres, Tirana, Berat and Elbasan. They started up in 1996. The aim was to train unemployed people to start their own businesses. The initiative started well: some 20 businessmen per club trained and set up their own businesses but, due to civil unrest in March 1997, the project came to a halt. The original aim was to set up 20 business clubs all over Albania.
2. Business incubators function in two cities: Tirana and Shkodra. The Tirana business incubator has 20 operational businesses run by people who are used to employing 100 people. In Shkodra, there are 22 business units ready to start with a total employment capacity of 150 persons. *(Annual Report on the Vocational Education and Training System, National Observatory 1999.)*

4.3 *Public works programme*

These programmes create incentives to combat long-term unemployment. They were mostly implemented during 1998 to fight the extreme unemployment rate by providing temporary work. Whether they would work in the long term is still open to question as they were not in force for long, did not integrate people with the workforce, and did not train them either.

➥During 1998–1999, the government launched the first programmes to counter long- term unemployment. These programmes were rapidly improvised and only ran for a little time.

➥During 1998, the programme went ahead as planned, and, apart from 3%, the budget of 1 billion lek was used up.

➥During 1999, 72 % of the allocated funds were used.

Of 691 projects:

- 108 projects were carried out in urban areas by municipalities;

- 326 projects were carried out in rural areas by local governments;
- 78 of these projects were organised and carried out by State Enterprises such as the Public Health Office, the State Road and Construction Enterprise, and the Water Supply Enterprise. These projects were mainly in urban areas;
- private firms carried out another 178 projects.

Altogether, 43,518 people were employed. Of these, 27,759 drew social assistance and 1,648 unemployment benefit.

On average, people participate in these programmes for three months.

Type of project	Number of projects
Rural affairs	58
Urban affairs	115
Electrification	5
Drainage	37
Irrigation	27
Forestry	7
Roads	338
Schools	14
Telecommunication	5
Bridges	9
Aqueduct	43
Waste processing	17
Other works	16
TOTAL	**391**

(Annual Report on the vocational education and training system, National Observatory 1999.)

The "type of the project" represents the field of work activity where public works are carried out, whereas number of projects represents the number of projects for each of these activities in the whole country.

Although they were largely successful, these projects attracted strong criticism from many experts because they did not last very long, and they had little impact in fighting long term unemployment. The investment would have achieved more if it had been channelled into the promotion of longer-term employment programmes and into training the workforce for more dynamic enterprises.

In 1999, the implementation of employment promotion programmes started. These programmes have legal support from decisions taken by Councils of Ministers, No 69/1, 69/2 and 73, approved during spring 1999. 169 projects started during 1999, and the total fund allocated to them was 425,816,939 lek.

The beneficiaries numbered 8,069.

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Main employment directions	Number of employed
Agriculture, livestock	1070
Fishing	123
Extract industry	356
Food processing	372
Confections	3171
Wood processing, paper, printing	449
Leather processing	980
Services, trade, hotels restaurants	100
Construction, maintenance	1285
Other	163
TOTAL	**8069**

Firms qualify for licences according to the number of employees they take on including those on social assistance and the long term unemployed. Other criteria are being regular payers of tax and other financial obligations; likewise, type of business, whether in top economy sectors such as construction, tourism, farming, food processing, services etc.

We predict that companies that train employees will be in line for larger allowances. If people are employed for more than one year, the companies concerned will qualify for further incentives. So far, there are few signs these initiatives have proved successful.

4.4 *Labour offices*

Labour offices are urgently required to raise the number of people in work. Between June and August 1999, they identified and filled 3,850 vacancies. Of these, 17% were in services; 33.2%, in trade apprenticeships, and 29%, in other types of "first-job" employment. Female workers accounted for 56% of these jobs.

Of all those who secured employment in1999, 28% got jobs through employment programmes. The labour offices only acquired 13.3% of them, a figure that shows up the low level of labour market development and the unsatisfactory relationship between labour offices and the business community.

The percentage of people that businesses employ and then report to the labour offices is 56%. Hence, the need yet again to reinforce and extend the competencies and roles of labour and employment services in different regions.

Between September and December 1999, the Ministry succeeded in placing 13,700 people. Of these, 56% got jobs through employment promotion programmes and 23% by engagement in public works.

Employment promotion programmes

Programmes to promote employment comprise one of the measures undertaken by the Albanian government to fight unemployment. Legislation to promote employment was enacted in 1999. After

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that, labour office staff trained to carry out legislation and alert employers to the effectiveness of the programmes.

June 1999 saw the start of courses of temporary employment and work training that lasted at least one year (Council of Ministers Decision 69/1 and 69/2). These courses took place in Berat, Durres, Malesi e Madhe, Fier Skrapar, Vlore (covering the whole country) and consisted of 23 projects for 1,000 people. A fund of 430 million Lek was approved for 1999 for 70 projects that aimed to employ 7,655 people as follows: 49% in confectionery; 12% in agriculture and stock farming, 13% in leather processing, and 5% in printing.

In 2000, other projects proceeded in Tirana, Berat, Saranda, Dibra, Korca, Kucova, Librazh, Permet and Scraper. Each one offered significant chances for employment. Although these programmes are not enough to make significant inroads on the high unemployment rate in Albania, they do at least:

- activate employment services in fighting unemployment and gaining experience in dealing with such issues;
- advertise the services of labour offices and link them more closely to the world of work;
- establish mutual trust between labour offices and businesses;
- provide experience and generate an environment favourable to generating the essentials for creating new jobs and new job placement programmes.

The Albanian government has a social assistance and social services strategy for meeting the needs of different groups at risk. This strategy works in two ways. The first includes the social services that ensure these groups survive. The second includes government policies for reintegrating some of these groups.

The administration offices in rural and urban areas play an important role in carrying out the social assistance programme. They receive funds according to the national scheme of economic assistance and they offer it to families or individuals without incomes, to support them with their health and social issues. In 1996, general social expenses absorbed 8% of the gross domestic product. Of those expenses, 75% went on social pensions and 20% on economic assistance.

During 1996, economic assistance was less than in 1995 and families at risk suffered accordingly. The number of families that benefited from it was 20% of all Albanian families. Unfortunately, numerous poor people cannot receive economic assistance. Some are disqualified because of the post-1995 shift towards bigger centres – a measure adopted to prevent people from taking advantage of uncontrolled movement. There are some others that ought to qualify for benefit, but they cannot receive it due to the bureaucratic difficulties in registering.

The traditional family that supported its members, the tribal structure in Albania, and the long-term communist system - all three of these have made it difficult to create non-governmental organisations offering services and support to marginalised groups. Nevertheless, the number of rural non-governmental organisations has increased in recent years. A considerable number of foreign non-governmental organisations also exist. These organisations offer several social services, but, in most cases, they work independently of each other and rarely have robust links with the government.

The Albanian forum of non-governmental organisations, the main representative organisation, includes more than 200 local non-governmental organisations. Only 90 of them actually function, the rest exist only on paper. Most of the organisations are very small, they have two or three members and no defined function or clear mission. According to the forum, only 10 of them offer social services. Most of them are linked to foreign organisations or institutions. There are no

organisations supported by the population as a whole. Out of 90 organisations, 18 cover women's issues, of which only four played a key role in fighting violence against women and gender discrimination. Other non-governmental organisations offer micro credits to help set up family businesses and courses. They also serve as training and information centres to open up a new range of economic possibilities. Many participants are young girls from rural areas who are encouraged to begin their own businesses. Several Albanian non-governmental organisations were supported by Italian, Dutch and Swiss non-governmental organisations. Their aim was to train women to be self-employed. The venture succeeded. Many of these women, once trained and given micro credits, set up their own businesses such as greenhouses for flowers and plants, weaving carpets, weaving cloth and engaging in artistic handicrafts. The American organisation Land O' Lake, is quite outstanding. For several years now, it has been training rural women to run dairies. It has not only improved the practical skills of these women, it has also organised them into a network of groups that unites to improve the end-products and get the best possible price for them.

There are also several international non-governmental organisations operating in Albania. The Catholic Church leads most of them. Their network is made up of religious, educational, medical and social service centres with a staff of 100 people of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The activities are carried out mainly in Tirana and other centres of catholic population. Some Islamic non-governmental organisations are implementing programmes for children, education and health. Other smaller non-governmental organisations are active in the field of women, children and babies. The Soros Foundation, another non-governmental organisation, is engaged in several programmes in the field of education (Albanian Education Development Programme). Other projects concern research, publications, campaigns, conferences and other activities to alert people to the difficulties faced by some groups.

While international non-governmental organisations are making a valuable contribution in the humanitarian field, it by no means meets the needs of all the people.

Civil society, together with various national and international non-governmental organisations, is very active in implementing projects directly linked to these groups. It focuses on relieving poverty, reducing the extent of exclusion, minimising the risks of social exclusion for different social groups, and, above all, fighting the prejudices, violence and ignorance that bedevils the lives of those at risk.

As we have seen, by no means all non-governmental organisations are active or offer services. Indeed, this can be said for only a few of them. Some of them deal with public awareness in different fields and indirectly help to keep the public informed.

Over the past ten years, some non-governmental organisations have got involved in social services, and proved very successful.

Useful to Albanian Women is an Albanian non-governmental organisation. Funded by different donors (Dutch, Danish and Swiss), it mainly aims to help Albanian women cope with the difficulties of transition. For several years, it provided women with training. At the start, the courses prepared women for self-employment in different ways but with a frequent focus on the Albanian handicraft tradition. This prompted women in various parts of the country to start their own businesses, some of which still flourish.

This non-governmental organisation is noted nationwide for helping abandoned, abused and/or street children in various ways. It has set up a daily centre where the children can obtain vocational training, a basic education together with food and, if necessary, treatment. The children that attend these courses have a chance of employment of one sort or another, mainly in shoe repair, hairdressing and other related activities.

The Independent Forum of Albanian Women is another Albanian non-governmental organisation that has long offered different levels of education and training for women. As women suffer more than men from social upheaval, this organisation set up training and support for women. To upgrade the education level of women, it runs various seminars and courses to help women appreciate all the opportunities open to them within a democratic society. This non-governmental organisation has branches in different cities, and its members run their own business growing flowers in greenhouses. In some areas, this enterprise is working out well.

Reflexione also aims to alert Albanian women to the dangers of violence and abuse. It is the first non-governmental organisation in the country to organise round table meetings, seminars and open discussions on violence, prostitution, and the trafficking of women and girls. As data and experience show, "Reflexione" has set up social services including hot lines in various parts of Albania, shelter and an advice centre.

There are non-governmental organisations for people with disabilities that give them special treatment and, at the same time, enable them to produce wheelchairs for people in the same group. In this way, they can make some money for themselves, and improve their economic situation at home. This activity raises their self-esteem and makes them feel independent and productive in our very competitive society. It also provides wheelchairs for people who have been waiting for them a long time. And it shows that qualifications and training are vital to social inclusion. Some have been trained to master more sophisticated processes, and they are correspondingly better paid. This activity brings home to people just how important training can be – even, or rather especially, to the handicapped.

Different interviews showed that people really appreciate the work done by non-governmental organisations. However, they would have like to see more co-operation between some of them and better distribution of their services in different parts of the country. They would also prefer to see a higher level of volunteer work among them, and better co-operation between non-governmental organisations and the state. That way, the government is more aware of all these problems and more likely to help out with funds from the state budget.

On the strength of the above analyses of the work done by the government and the civil society to help meet the needs of excluded groups, it is recommended:

a) allow for the different values and problems unique to each region when you set up programmes to help groups and communities at risk;

b) these programmes must match the basic needs of excluded groups or those at risk of exclusion - such people make up a significant proportion of the population;

c) given the high incidence of population movement during the last years, use pilot projects. Something that could have proved useful a year ago, may not be so relevant now;

d) groups at risk have multi-dimensional needs. Bear this in mind when setting up programmes for them;

e) to ensure the programmes work, the various people involved must work together;

f) up to a point, the programmes must reflect current values;

g) the programmes must have demonstrable results. That way, people have confidence in them, and they will encourage the setting up of other programmes and projects;

h) the programmes must have both short- and medium-term objectives. The former will generate trust among specialists and clients. The second ones must aim to programmes must involve local partners;

i) these programmes must make use of local resources such as social workers who can forge links between institutions at different levels.

5. Methodologies of approaching risk groups

The Soros Foundation is one of the organisations that started up just after the first attempts to change the system in Albania. It supported the most progressive forces from the start, and invested in making the most of the changes. This organisation is involved in several projects to raise public awareness on different issues such as gender issues, education and publications. One of the Soros Foundation's activities has been improving the education system. This report on " Vocational Education and Training against Social Exclusion" recommends the work of this foundation as an example to be followed by other non-governmental organisations.

The Albanian Education Development Program is the section of the Soros Foundation that deals mainly with education issues. As we have seen in previous chapters, the education of children is still the best way to fight social exclusion. When children are orphans, abandoned, handicapped or dropouts; when they are new to the capital city, beggars or street children, they are all more likely to attain social inclusion if they have had some education and training. The reverse is true: no education automatically puts children at risk of social exclusion.

Considering education in this way, the Soros Foundation has set up a programme for improving education in rural areas (see Chapter 3: "Children"). This macro project consists of different micro projects, whose content and effectiveness will be analysed below.

5.1 *The assessment of the situation in education in rural areas*

This research project assessed the situation of education in rural areas with a view to improving the infrastructure especially of elementary schools; upgrading the teaching; improving school attendance by solving difficulties arising from teaching, economic or social problems; and engendering co-operation between schools, communities and parents. It also aimed to involve parents more in school problems; improve communications between teachers and students; organise education for adults; and, amongst much else, fund raising. To carry out this project, the Soros Foundation has organised surveys, meetings and discussions with teachers, parents and students. It has also used statistical data provided by the Ministry of Education and Science.

5.2 *Training of teachers in rural areas*

This project supports the training of teachers in rural areas. It covers six districts, 37 schools and 710 teachers. This project aims to upgrade the teaching level of teachers in rural areas that account for 52% of the Albanian educational system. It supports teachers who do not have proper qualifications or those that teach collective classes; i.e. classes that comprise students at different stages of their

education. Teachers can learn how to prepare different teaching materials; and they have access to teaching modules and other training materials. This project is carried out through various seminars, published materials and with the co-operation of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Pedagogical Institute, the Regional Department of Education, and a number of specialists, some from universities.

5.3 *Grants for parents*

The project aims to involve parents and the community in general in attempts to improve the quality of education in rural areas. It also aims to strengthen co-operation between schools and communities in making decisions, enhancing the infrastructure and other issues relevant to this type of partnership.

Above all, this project aims to persuade parents and the community to think of school as a centre for the whole community, serving them as well as their children. The main thrust of this project is to promote co-operation between school boards with headmasters and students. This project involves eight districts and 46 schools in the country. The results of this project will serve as a model for other schools in the country. The intended result is that in time, parents will commit themselves to school issues such as school management, fund raising and fund management. These elements will lead schools towards decentralisation and offer ways to implement new ideas. For example, the latter might include making the school curriculum flexible enough to meet regional requirements, meeting the need for teacher training, and developing extra-curricular activities for students.

5.4 *"The Cluster" Project*

The project aims at the overall development of education in two communes. It starts by creating the essentials for normal learning and high quality teaching. This project trains teachers in their particular disciplines. It also teaches them to qualify as school administrators and briefs them on how to experiment with teaching methods that solve particular problems.

The "Cluster" zone must attract a full complement of students. It must then encourage them to take up extra-curricular activities, especially those likely to drop out of school. It must also involve parents as active partners in school life.

5.5 *School abandonment and illiteracy*

School abandonment and illiteracy are closely linked and are increasingly common in rural areas. These children, if not helped in time, are in danger of being involved in illegal activities such as drug dealing, drinking alcohol, criminal activities and prostitution. These activities exacerbate the risk of being socially excluded and marginalised by society.

The project aims to support schools and communities. To achieve this, it gauges the extent of illiteracy; helps teachers and school principals to work with individual students during and after school; helps to eradicate subversive traits; alerts parents to dangers; and organises special activities for these children. The end-results of the projects are published for those interested in this field.

5.6 *Education of Roma students*

The project researched various districts of the country to collect information on the geographical, economic, social and cultural situation of the Roma Community. Amongst much else, the research resources comprised existing written material and interviews with Roma children. The information collected is useful as a basis for creating other programmes specific to Roma.

a. Roma curriculum development.

The project aims to introduce supplementary curricula for Roma students. These will come about through the development of several special demand-driven modules that aim to help Roma to be literate and educated. The modules will cover languages, reading, maths and natural history. There will also be a module on the Romany language for Roma adults and children. Further materials will include booklets and maps on the culture of Roma population. Other activities such as competitions, art exhibitions and song festivals will be organised by Roma and non-Roma students.

b. Roma teacher training.

The project concentrates on training teachers to teach Roma students. Initially, this project provided teachers with communication, teaching and psychological skills suited to this type of student. Later, it concentrated on issues that emerged in the course of teaching Roma. The training methodology embraces meetings, interviews and workshops. The training activities will proceed in tandem with the Curriculum development Project.

c. Changing school into a social and resource centre for the Roma community.

We must get the Roma community to understand why education is so important both for themselves and their children. To achieve this, we must set up community centres and develop activities and resources suited to both children and their parents.

These are only some of the projects run by Soros Foundation in the field of education. Some of them are still being implemented, others are planned for the future. Please note that all these projects are inspired by the national policy on education, which stresses that every child has a right to an education; in particular, the Republic of Albania must provide elementary education for all children. This applies regardless of gender, ethnic background, domicile and economic and social status.

These projects have achieved:

- more public awareness of education and school abandonment;
- more teachers trained for rural areas with serious educational problems;
- improvement of infrastructure of schools;
- improvement of staff qualifications across the board in the field of education;
- establishment of new practices in education;
- establishment of new and more flexible ways of dealing with new problems of education;
- establishment of curricula based on regional characteristics;
- establishment of flexible teaching modules to meet special needs of certain children and adults;
- establishment of new ways to communicate with parents and teachers;
- schools that act as community centres for children and adults alike.

These are just some of the achievements of these projects. Overall evaluation highlights the effectiveness of their campaign against the social exclusion of children in rural areas. Sadly, this does not include Roma children because they lack education.

These projects take place only in some areas in the country and have yet to attain national coverage.

5.7 *Draft project proposal to prevent social exclusion*

On the strength of our research for this report, we believe that all the groups at risk of social exclusion, or already socially excluded, need training to combat their isolation and marginalisation from the rest of the society. The group most at risk comprises women and girls. This is due to changes in values and norms, to a "fast buck" mindset, to the dangers of trafficking and prostitution, and to emigration and divorce.

We believe that a civilised society should enable women to enjoy their rights and enjoy their lives on terms equal to men. Such a society displays strength in a way that bodes well for the future as well as the present. There is an old Albanian saying, "Educated and civilised mothers raise healthy and educated children". And that is why Albanians are so sensitive about women's issues and why projects to help them attract so much support from the community. Of course, Albanians have always been sensitive about women. Even the old law (Kanun) protects them in a special way. And then the time comes when Albanian men start trafficking in women, selling and using them as slaves. That is why, of all the groups at risk, women must have top priority.

Fortunately, this risk group has enough education background to take courses against social exclusion. With some training to upgrade their labour skills, they should have no problems in approaching the labour market.

At the same time, women used to leave home to go to work during the communist regime. Hard though that experience was, it at least gave women a chance to compete with men in the labour market, to make money for their families, to be on equal terms with their husbands and, generally, feel more independent.

Bearing all these factors in mind, we believe that, while this group is at risk, it can easily be helped towards social inclusion.

The situation of women differs from one part of the country to another. Women in rural and mountain areas in Northern and North Eastern Albania are in more danger due to eccentric ethics and values and the high level of unemployment. These difficulties exist alongside younger generation tending to emigrate and ambitions to get rich quick by dealing in drugs and prostitution.

Project proposal

Title of the project: Training trainers to set up counselling centres for women

Location: **Tirana**

Time duration: **two years**

Background

After the second world war, over 80% of the population lived in rural areas, 95% of women were illiterate, only 7% had paid work, and their average life-expectancy was 38. Before she was 20, the average woman used to leave her family to marry a man chosen by her father, or, in his absence, by another male member of her family. Her life was then devoted to having children and working: on average, she bore six children and every day she carried water for people to drink at home. She also bred animals and worked in the fields.

In the Catholic North, society was strictly controlled by the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini, a code of customary law that dates back to the 15th century. The Kanun's ethics and mores, which used to apply beyond the boundaries of today's Albania, survived to the Ottoman conquest and to Hoxha's repression. Some of its tenets still live on, especially those related to honour, solidarity within the family, equality among men and stress on female inferiority. According to Kanun, women have no rights, legal or otherwise.

In the rest of the country, women fared no better. In the South, Orthodox canonical acts debarred women from any social activity unless they had their husbands' permission. In Muslim Central Albania, women were confined at home and had to wear veils, while men could be polygamous. Not surprisingly, the first Civil Code of 1929 upheld male authority by stating that a woman must ask her husband's permission before getting work.

Albanian women entered political life in 1943 with the creation of the Union of Albanian Antifascist Women to help liberate the country. Some 6,000 women joined this partisan movement. At the time, Albania had a population of only one million.

After the Second World War, equality between men and women became law. However, despite that, relations between women and the Party of Labour are still ambivalent. During Hoxha's 45 year-long rule, women gradually acquired equal rights to education and paid work. At the same time, the regime could not - and probably had no wish to - curb patriarchal control and allow real female emancipation.

How did the end of the communist regime affect Albanian women?

The economic crisis that hit Albania at the end of the 1980s, culminated in 1990 with the overthrow of the regime. This precipitated the virtual collapse of the state. The law and the economy were in crisis. Widespread unemployment affected women even worse than men. Public services that took the strain off many women - for example, kindergartens, laundries and bakeries - simply disappeared.

This political and social collapse created a vacuum. Into it rushed social isolation, unemployment and separation from husbands, including their economic and social support. As a result, many women were abused and took to drug trafficking and prostitution. These are the realities of life for many Albanian women today.

During the communist regime, Albanian women had access to education for two key reasons. First, the party in power pretended to promote equality between men and women. Second, parents

wanted their daughters to be educated and thereby have access to a better, safer future. They also poured into virtually every sector of the labour market.

The economic collapse of the early 1990s meant massive unemployment, especially for women who, given the disappearance of the social services, had to stay at home and cope. In 1994, in major cities, women accounted for 65 per cent of the unemployed; 35 to 45s were particularly hard hit. In 1995, urban registered unemployment amounted to 14.8% of women and 11.6% men. By 1996, urban female unemployment had slightly decreased to 13.4% while male unemployment stayed at 11.4%.

This project aims to:

a) train trainers from different parts of the country, so they can then run educational and training courses for women in their areas;

b) set up multifunctional training centres for women in the main regions of the country;

c) prepare training courses that include basic education, as well as vocational training based on previous experience and/or regional traditions.

The centres will offer:

1. counselling from specialists;
2. referrals to specialised services;
3. basic educational courses for illiterate women;
4. training courses for women looking for employment, upgrading working skills or teaching new skills;
5. information courses on community resources;
6. education courses on child care, etc.

As well as providing these services, these centres will give women a chance to get together. Along with an excuse to get out of the house and meet friends, the women will also absorb information and acquire training.

Project Implementation:

This project will be in several phases:

First phase

Identification of people from different areas for training to cover the above fields. It will take a month to visit the areas and assess the motivation and skills of the people concerned.

Second phase

Preparing the trainers and their training modules in Tirana.

Third phase

During this phase, trainers will go to Tirana and learn how to teach women. Trainers will be put in groups to train in specific fields. There will be five training courses, one for each subject. One trainer from each area will train to teach basic education. Another will train to give psychosocial counselling. A third will train to teach how to bring up children. A fourth will train to teach women to start their own businesses. The last will train to encourage women to engage in existing regional handicrafts.

So five groups will train, and each group will have a representative from each area. This phase will last six months.

Future phases will include setting up centres in at least one region, and activity starting up in at least one centre.

Expected outcomes

We expect to give women some scope for integration and inclusion in society. This can be achieved , amongst other ways, by:

- education,
- upgrading of working skills,
- improving knowledge of community resources,
- improving communication skills,
- upgrading knowledge of child development,
- raising awareness on women's issues,
- increasing defences against the wounds of the contemporary society.

Recommendations

This report portrays the irregularities of a society in transition, where instability causes marginalisation that, in turn, causes the exclusion of different groups. Their number is growing, but not enough to impel public agencies and high-profile individuals to act. As a result, the state of these people continues to be dire. We need to launch initiatives that go beyond the standard ways of reducing poverty, initiatives that target specific groups. The actions must aim to:

- improve the conditions of the socially excluded so that they gain social inclusion;
- use education and training to prevent social exclusion;
- prepare social policies to prevent and protect people from social exclusion;
- improve existing social policies on social exclusion;
- plan concrete measures to combat social exclusion.

But how do we set about implementing a strategy that does all these things? In this report, we suggest a strategy based on **analytical** and **operational components.**

The analytical component demands:

- creation of social capital for a cohesive society;
- drawing up a strategic route;
- identifying the components of strategic action.

The operational component demands:

- an action plan that pinpoints aims based on the differences and peculiarities of each area in the country;
- preparation and implementation of short-term projects for socially excluded groups;
- preparation and implementation of mid-term projects that acknowledge the expansion of previous projects to combat social exclusion.

Annex

Some courses offered by Vocational Training Centres (VTC) in Albania:

Centres	Courses	Period		Participants by gender and employment status			Participants by age groups			Participants by educational attainment		
		start	finish	all	Female	unempl	20	21- 34	Over 34	primary	secondary	tertiary
Tirana VTC 1	Total			1041	828	468	371	490	180	0	690	351
	English	04.01.99	15.03.99	179	175	64	54	95	30	0	107	72
	"	29.03.99	07.06.99	226	154	65	62	115	49	0	135	91
	"	28.06.99	06.09.99	226	181	82	75	110	41	0	147	79
	Computer	18.01.99	08.03.99	86	70	57	35	40	11	0	51	35
	"	15.03.99	03.05.99	68	65	50	26	37	5	0	39	29
	"	07.06.99	26.07.99	35	14	35	7	20	8	0	24	11
	Tailoring	22.03.99	22.07.99	40	40	20	10	19	11	0	28	12
	Auto services	22.02.99	22.06.99	49	0	20	28	14	7	0	44	5
	Cosmetics	01.02.99	01.06.99	14	14	8	10	3	1	0	13	1
	"	07.06.99	07.10.99	16	16	10	11	4	1	0	15	1
	Secretary	11.01.99	15.03.99	40	40	20	20	14	6	0	36	4
	"	22.03.99	24.05.99	42	42	20	20	14	8	0	36	6
	"	14.06.99	16.08.99	5	2	2	3	2	0	0	5	0
Tirana VTC 4	Total			82	8	82	69	13	0	50	32	0
	Plumber	01.10.99	01.06.00	22	0	22	22	0	2	18	4	0
	Gadget repair	"	"	23	0	23	23	0	0	8	15	0
	Shoe maker	"	"	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
	Tailoring	"	"	10	8	10	8	2	0	8	2	0
	TV repair	"	"	11	0	11	0	11	0	0	11	0
	Fitter	"	"	15	0	15	15	0	0	15	0	0
Durres VTC	Total			516	400	421	254	193	69	0	405	111
	English	16.01.99	16.04.99	156	129	116	32	99	25	0	116	40
	"	20.05.99	02.08.99	151	105	141	77	48	26	0	115	36
	"	01.09.99	20.12.99	167	125	129	120	31	16	0	135	32
	Secretary	01.06.99	30.06.99	21	21	19	14	6	0	0	20	1
	"	01.09.99	01.11.99	21	20	16	10	9	2	0	19	2

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Centres	Courses	Period		Participants by gender and employment status			Participants by age groups			Participants by educational attainment		
		start	finish	all	Female	unempl	20	21- 34	Over 34	primary	secondary	tertiary
Shkoder VTC	Total			598	403	372	223	241	134	60	326	212
	Computer	02.11.98	08.01.99	51	38	32	12	28	11	8	22	21
	"	18.01.99	19.03.99	42	32	29	10	16	16	6	14	22
	"	07.06.99	06.08.99	40	30	20	26	6	8	1	26	13
	English	23.11.98	08.02.99	161	119	98	56	76	29	13	96	52
	"	15.02.99	07.05.99	168	115	98	66	65	37	12	84	72
	"	17.05.99	30.07.99	57	39	37	26	16	15	3	44	10
	Gadget repair	16.11.98	05.02.99	17	0	11	8	5	4	4	11	2
	"	15.02.99	07.05.99	17	0	14	13	4	0	8	7	2
	"	17.05.99	30.07.99	12	0	9	2	5	5	4	8	0
	Secretary	16.11.98	05.02.99	16	14	10	1	8	7	1	9	6
	"	15.02.99	07.05.99	6	5	4	0	6	0	0	1	5
	"	17.05.99	30.07.99	11	11	10	3	6	2	0	4	7
Vlore VTC	Total			289	236	228	165	88	36	24	168	97
	English	16.01.99	09.04.99	48	37	32	22	15	11	5	26	17
	"	19.04.99	09.07.99	44	33	41	26	12	6	8	14	22
	"	19.04.99	09.07.99	40	31	27	20	13	7	0	28	12
	"	19.07.99	30.09.99	121	99	93	77	35	9	9	66	46
	Secretary	25.01.99	30.03.99	14	14	13	5	8	1	0	14	0
	"	13.04.99	11.06.99	13	13	13	8	4	1	1	12	0
	"	05.07.99	03.09.99	9	9	9	7	1	1	1	8	0
Elbasan VTC	Total			410	310	237	121	226	63	0	237	173
	Secretary	18.01.99	25.03.99	14	14	13	5	9	0	0	12	2
	"	14.04.99	18.06.99	20	19	4	12	7	1	0	18	2
	"	28.06.99	30.09.99	24	24	18	4	17	3	0	6	18
	English	15.02.99	03.05.99	87	56	57	26	50	11	0	47	40
	"	10.02.99	08.04.99	59	47	37	14	37	8	0	33	26
	"	16.02.99	30.04.99	54	45	19	6	32	16	0	26	28
	"	04.05.99	13.07.99	67	43	30	18	40	9	0	37	30
	"	04.05.99	09.07.99	3	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	2
	"	06.09.99	30.09.99	82	61	59	36	32	14	0	57	25
TOTAL	**TOTAL**			**2936**	**2185**	**1808**	**1203**	**1251**	**482**	**134**	**1858**	**944**

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